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The situation in the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 8 January 2003 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Bahrain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith the Final Report and Recommendations (see annex I), as well as the Bahrain Declaration (see annex II), of the tenth session of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Conference, held in Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain, from 20 to 30 October 2002.

I would be grateful if you could arrange to have the Final Report and Recommendations, as well as the Bahrain Declaration, circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda items 24, 35, 36 and 160.

(*Signed*) Mohammed **Saleh**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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Annex I to the letter dated 8 January 2003 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Bahrain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

Final Report and Recommendations of the tenth session of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Conference, held in Manama from 28 to 30 October 2002

We thank Almighty God for having given us the chance to hold this Muslim-Christian Dialogue Conference in Manama, capital of the Kingdom of Bahrain, at the proposal of His Holiness The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I as accepted by His Majesty Sheikh Hamad Bin Issa Al-Khalifah, King of Bahrain.

For the purpose of establishing fruitful cooperation that will ensure peaceful coexistence on Earth at the national, regional and international levels and in view of the fundamental role played by religion and scholars of religion in laying the bases of justice, security and peace emanating from the teachings of the revealed religions, the purpose of which is to protect human beings from all forms of aggression against their very existence, security and safety, this dialogue conference was convened to lay the bases called for by the scriptures and holy texts with a view to establishing peaceful coexistence between individuals and communities locally, regionally and internationally.

This session was held from 28 to 30 October 2002 on the theme "The role of religion in peaceful coexistence", under the patronage of His Excellency Sheikh Abdullah Bin Khalifa Al-Khalifah, Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain. At the nine working meetings, discussions and comments focused on the three topics of the Conference, namely:

1. Principles of peaceful coexistence at the local level.
2. Principles of peaceful coexistence at the regional level.
3. Principles of peaceful coexistence at the international level.

The Muslim and Christian participants agreed on the following principles:

1. Affirmation of their belief in one God, raising the behaviour of individuals and communities towards a moral ideal.
2. Their strong condemnation of any defamation of the prophets and messengers, which they view as an attack on the belief in one God whose prophets and messengers were sent to guide mankind.
3. Affirmation of the belief that life cannot be regulated apart from religion, which charts the path of righteousness for mankind. Thus, the participants affirm their attachment to the values, ethics and principles of religion in order to establish peace, justice and cooperation among men.
4. Affirmation that belief in God means, of necessity, upholding what is just and protecting human dignity and prosperity.

5. Condemnation of anything that abuses the rites, holy places and objects of worship of Muslims and Christian and affirmation of the intention to establish mutual respect in this area.

6. Affirmation that justice in all its forms is the basis of peace and peaceful coexistence and that injustice in all its forms is one of the main causes of enmity, war and terror in all their aspects.

7. Affirmation that usurpation of rights, abuse of holy places and assaults on prosperity are among the serious threats against peace and peaceful coexistence in the world and lead to war and the resulting destruction and misfortune.

8. In recognition of the preference accorded by God to human beings over all other creatures and the rights granted them by divine law, the belief that denial of these rights constitutes an international danger and a threat to peace and peaceful coexistence in the world.

9. Affirmation that terrorizing peaceful and civilian populations through any form of aggression or intimidation is an act of terrorism that is not tolerated by divine teachings.

10. Recognition that respect for agreements and conventions is a sacred duty in all religions in order to ensure security and peaceful coexistence.

11. Affirmation that isolated acts cannot allow religion to be condemned, since no religion or nation should be accused or condemned for acts committed by some of its members.

12. Affirmation that religion should not be used as a shield or a pretext for pillaging property or attacking people and holy places.

13. Affirmation that the right to resist of those who are oppressed and under attack is recognized by all divine teachings which moreover consider self-defence and resistance against an occupying force to be a sacred duty.

Based on these principles, the participants made the following recommendations:

1. The need to launch a constructive dialogue among the faithful of all divine beliefs so as to bring about the cooperation essential for laying the bases of international peace and coexistence and ensuring the security and safety of individuals and communities.

2. Absence of conflict among civilizations, since all divine teachings aim to ensure mankind's happiness and to establish security and peace in the world.

3. The international community must define terrorism that targets civilians and innocent people who, horrified, see themselves and their property threatened.

4. Condemnation of occupation, usurpation of rights and property and violation of holy places, irrespective of the motives or justifications.

5. Forceful condemnation of the occupation of Palestinian territories and of all acts of aggression committed in Palestine and in other parts of the world and appeal to the international community to participate in a responsible and practical manner in implementing international resolutions.

6. The United Nations and the United Nations Security Council should be asked to intervene in a practical way to end political crises that lead to cruel wars in all countries.

7. International decision makers should intervene to end massacres of minorities in every country of the world in order to establish peace and security and ensure peaceful coexistence.

8. Heads of State should support integrated adjustment and development programmes that serve the interests of their citizens and should work to improve their quality of life.

9. Denunciation of discrimination in all its forms, affirmation of the need to respect the principles of human rights and call for greater cooperation between religions in order to ensure the peaceful coexistence of individuals and communities.

At the end of the meeting, after hearing the excellent speech given by His Excellency Sheikh Khalifah bin Hamad Al Khalifah, deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Islamic Affairs and Vice-Chairman of the Supreme Organizing Committee, the participants recommended that the text of his speech should be included among the conference documents, which would, God willing, be codified internationally, so that it might be translated into a tangible reality reflecting their ideas in practice. They also recommended that a permanent joint secretariat for the Muslim-Christian dialogue, comprising the Kingdom of Bahrain and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, should be created.

Annex II to the letter dated 8 January 2003 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Bahrain to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

Bahrain Declaration to the tenth session of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Conference, held in Manama from 28 to 30 October 2002

On the conclusion of the tenth session of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Conference held in Manama, capital of the Kingdom of Bahrain, from 28 to 30 October 2002 and in accordance with the instructions given by His Majesty Sheikh Hamad Bin Issa Al-Khalifah, King of Bahrain, in response to a proposal by His Holiness The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I and with a view to enhancing cooperation between Muslims and Christians so as to reinforce their peaceful coexistence and international cooperation and conduct an exchange of views on contemporary issues of mutual importance to strengthen the bases for mutual understanding between followers of these two religions, achieve peaceful coexistence at the local, regional and international levels and lay the foundations of a universal peace based on the values common to the divine messages of Islam and Christianity.

By hosting the tenth session of the Muslim-Christian Dialogue Conference in accordance with its profound belief in the importance of dialogue at all levels, Bahrain calls on all peoples and all nations to work to strengthen dialogue in the service of peaceful coexistence and eradication of violence; it also invites them to exchange views on contemporary issues in order to serve mankind and ensure human security and happiness by sparing mankind the risks of conflict, at the same time reminding all peoples and nations of the noble principles embodied in the messages of Islam and Christianity concerning coexistence and respect for religious and national specificities, encouraging constructive cooperation and supporting the efforts of Muslim and Christian scholars and intellectuals to create the bases for peaceful coexistence and respect for others, in accordance with the teachings of Islam and Christianity.

Based on the aims of this conference bringing together Muslims and Christians for a constructive and useful dialogue, the participants propose the following:

1. Continue the dialogue and encourage cooperation activities for promoting peaceful coexistence.

2. Cooperate, after the interreligious dialogue, in healing the traumatic experiences of the historical past by taking concrete initiatives at the local level to dispel prejudices and encourage the faithful to respect the particularities of other religious traditions.

3. Work together from an international perspective on a modern interreligious dialogue to promote the idea of peace with freedom and social justice and to extend protection of human rights to relations between peoples and nations throughout the world.

4. Recognize that violence breeds violence, that repression breeds animosity and hatred and that, accordingly, concerned authorities must counter violence by constructive dialogue rather than repression.

5. Emphasize religious principles, tolerance and mercy and put them in their proper context, which was to enable mankind to achieve happiness and to guarantee security, safety and peaceful coexistence on Earth.

6. Respect the national, religious and cultural specificities of all societies.

7. Remove the obstacles to a proper and correct understanding of religion.

8. Urge civil society organizations in every community to play their role in protecting individuals from the invasion of *intellectual* confusion, protecting them mentally, psychologically and ethically from the resulting adverse effects.

9. Defend human rights and guarantee the security and safety of human beings by ensuring that concerned authorities assume their responsibilities in this regard.

10. Spread a proper understanding of religion among all concerned individuals through education and the mass media, using the known method of going back to the authentic sources recognized by each religion for information thereon.

The participants and organizers of the conference are happy to convey their profound gratitude and appreciation to His Majesty Sheikh Hamad Bin Issa Al-Khalifah, King of Bahrain, for the support he gave this conference, despite his many engagements, because of his belief in the necessity of encouraging the spirit of cooperation, understanding and friendship among nations and peoples.

The participants also welcomed the spirit of fraternity, harmony, love and objectivity that characterized the conference and thanked the people and government of Bahrain for their hospitality. They expressed their gratitude to His Excellency Sheikh Abdullah Bin Khaled Al-Khalifah, Minister of Justice and Islamic Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain, who attended the conference on behalf of His Majesty Sheikh Hamad Bin Issa Al-Khalifah, King of Bahrain, His Grace Bishop Emmanuel of Reghion, Director of the Office of Interreligious and Intercultural Relations of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and all the Muslim and Christian scholars and intellectuals for their contribution to the conference, as well as the chairpersons and members of the committees which were responsible for the preparations for the conference.

May Almighty God grant mankind success on the road to righteousness and wisdom.